



TRANSPORTATION SAFETY COMMISSION

CITY OF HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA

TO: Transportation Safety Commission Members, Council members, City Manager Kurt Hodgen, Assistant City Manager Evan Vass

FROM: Thanh H. Dang, Public Works Planner

DATE: September 9, 2008

RE: Transportation Safety Commission Minutes for September 4, 2008 Meeting

The Transportation Safety Commission met on Thursday October 2, 2008, 9AM, at the Community Development classroom at 409 S. Main Street.

Members and Advisory Members present included: Bill Blessing (Chairman), Thanh Dang, Drew Williams, Doug Stader, Len Van Wyk, MPO Greg Deeds, and Reggie Smith.

Guests present included: Bruce Hamilton, retired principal from Stone Spring Elementary School.

Citizens are always provided the opportunity to voice their views/concerns about any item before the commission. It is the policy of the Commission to move the agenda item to the beginning of the meeting when citizens attend Commission meetings to avoid detaining citizens for the entire meeting. However, any citizen is welcome to stay for the entire meeting.

Welcome

1. Future Special Presentation Topics. Ms. Thanh Dang requested suggestions from Commission and staff members for special presentations to the Commission. Officer Greg Deeds recommended a presentation on the Police Chief's Challenge and would present a powerpoint at the November Commission Meeting. Mr. Reggie Smith also recommended a presentation to discuss school bus routing procedures.

Old Business

1. **Railroad Crossing at S Main Street and Country Club Road – Update**

Ms. Dang gave an update. The City's Engineering department has developed a concept and completed cost estimates. For the crossing at South Main Street, it is estimated that improvements would cost approximately \$40,000. It is estimated that improvements to the County Club Road crossing will cost approximately \$30,000. Staff will present this information to the City Manager/City Council to move forward with improvements. Funding may either come through a supplemental appropriation to this year's budget or as a budget request item in FY 2010. Ms. Dang has received verbal approval of the concepts from Scott Snow, Norfolk Southern, written approval pending.

Mr. Blessing inquired about the status of the railroad relocation discussions that had occurred between Rockingham County, City of Harrisonburg and JMU in 2004-2006. Mr. Williams reported that the feasibility study had been received, however, no efforts to secure funding for an Environmental Assessment (EA) had been made at this time.

2. Waterman Drive & Chicago Drive Intersection.

Staff has no updates to report at this time.

3. Denton's building parking lot and Southwest corner of Court Square

Public Works staff recommended and the Commission agreed that either bollards to planters could be installed at the corners of the building to improve the line of sight between motorists and pedestrians at the September meeting. Ms. Dang shared that in discussions with Eddie Bumbaugh, Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance (HDR), that planters would be aesthetically preferred. The planters at the corners would require pedestrians to walk away from the building walls and into the motorists' line of sight. The planters will restrict vehicular traffic to approximately a 10' entrance. Mr. Bumbaugh has secured funding through HDR to fund two planters. Ms. Dang will approach the property owners (Sellers) to assume cost for plantings. The Department of Parks & Recreation has agreed to maintain flowers in the planters once in place.

4. Crossing students at Gay Street and High St/Virginia Ave.

At the September meeting, staff presented that it is not possible at this signal to program an all red pedestrian phase for two twenty minute intervals because there is a limit of 8 possible phases for signals and all are currently being used. The Commission requested that staff explore whether increasing the crossing times would help and Sgt. Keller will observe the crossing guard to determine if additional training is needed. Ms. Dang met with the crossing guard and stated that there are two students that need assistance crossing the intersection. The conflict between pedestrians and motorists arises when motorists are making a right hand turn on green when pedestrians are in the crosswalk. A lengthy discussion ensued about increasing signage in this location and others throughout the city that states "State Law: Yield to Pedestrians in Crosswalk." Public Works will consider additional appropriate signage at this location and report back to the Commission in November.

5. Removal of signal at intersection of Mason and Bruce Streets (Requested by Public Works)

The Public Works Department requests that the Commission consider removal of the signal at Mason and Bruce Streets at the September Commission Meeting. Ms. Dang reported that Public Works staff would be approaching Council to notify them that a traffic signal removal study will be conducted. Staff will make this presentation to Council at the October 14th regular meeting and report back findings at the November meeting. Once Council approves the request, Public Works will move forward with temporarily placing this signal on flash and begin an analysis period to determine if the signal could be permanently removed.

6. Bicycle and Motorist Education (Requested by City Council)

Staff continues to work on this project that was requested by City Council. Ms. Dang stated that reaching the target audience – primarily college age students – will be a challenge as they do not typically take interest in common forms of local media (i.e., newspaper, local television, radio, etc.). Ms. Dang is working with Miriam Dickler, Public Information Officer, on developing appropriate materials. She requested comments or suggestions from the Commission body.

Mr. Reggie Smith recommended advertisements on the bus that would encourage bicyclists and motorists alike to obey the rules of the road. This would be visible on the buses and displayed to both transportation users. Additional information could be included inside the buses. Posters were recommended at the G-lot which is a heavily used transit stop.

New Business

7. Bluestone Hills Drive – Citizen Request

Staff reported that neighborhood residents had petitioned the city for enrollment in the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program (NTCP) in 2007. Staff presented this item for consideration to keep the Commission aware that changes may be occurring in the neighborhood in the coming months. After a neighborhood meeting is established, staff will return to the Commission with recommendations and solutions in order to curtail high traffic speeds.

Other Business

8. Peach Grove Avenue – Stone Spring Elementary School

The Commission spent time discussing traffic issues on Stone Spring Road, focused around increased speeds between Stone Spring Road and Port Republic Road. Public Works has received complaints from the neighborhood in previous years, which have included speeding and high traffic volumes. Peach Grove Avenue is a vital transportation link and is designated as a collector street. Mr. Blessing stated whether rumble strips could be a reasonable measure to warn motorists to maintain safe speeds. Mr. Hamilton stated that teachers would frequently have trouble exiting from Stone Spring Elementary due to prevailing speeds on Peach Grove Avenue. This comment was reflected by Mr. Smith who stated that bus drivers have similar problems. Suggestions to consider included installation of speed limit signs/pedestrian warning signs with a flashing beacon, installation of a signal at the school entrance, addition of orange placards over speed limit signs, narrowing of pavement, etc. Greg Deeds

recommended relocating an existing 25 mph sign for southbound Peach Grove Avenue traffic. He stated that the sign's location is close to the Port Republic Road intersection and many drivers may not notice it as they negotiate their turning movements. Staff will take these suggestions into consideration, particularly with increased traffic that will result due to development of the Harman property from Stone Spring Road.

9. Education Campaign

Ms. Dang noted that there has been an increased interest in the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program amongst multiple neighborhoods throughout the City. She stated that high speeds are becoming a citywide issue that should be addressed through a citywide campaign. Ms. Dang stated there may be partnership opportunities between Public Works and the Police Department to organize press conferences in neighborhoods and increase police visibility in city neighborhoods.

10. Chestnut Ridge Drive at East Market Street

Mr. Smith stated that he has observed increased on-street parking near the Joe Bowman Chevrolet dealership on Chestnut Ridge Drive. Mr. Smith encouraged city staff to monitor how this parking is utilized and if it is abused, the Commission may wish to consider removal of on-street in the future, particularly once the traffic signal is installed at East Market Street and Chestnut Ridge Drive.

11. North 38

Mr. Smith expressed concern that North 38 had not provided amenities during development of the property that had been promised in planning and engineering stages, which included bus pull-offs and "no parking" designation on-street. Staff will look into this matter.

12. Devon Lane

Ms. Dang stated that sidewalks on Devon Lane were under construction and the last pour should be early next week.

13. East Market Street Sidewalk

Mr. Williams stated that the safety grant to construct sidewalk on East Market Street between Burgess Road and University Boulevard was moving forward. The City advertised the project on Saturday, September 27th and planned to award the contract later this fall.

Next Meeting: Thursday November 6, 2008, 9AM, at Community Development Classroom, 409 S. Main Street.

Adjourn